

GER Ron and First Lady Nancy Hicks' Visit to Arizona

We left DC Reagan Airport on a sunny Wednesday, May 11, on a direct flight to Phoenix and the Arizona Elks Convention. Before we left, we had the privilege of witnessing the arrival of an Honor Flight of World War II and Korean War Veterans to DC. They were welcomed by a jazz band and introduced one by one as they exited the ramp, many in wheelchairs, to a cheering crowd of several hundred travelers. It was a proud moment to see our Veterans being honored and thanked for their service.

With a three hour time difference, we arrived in Phoenix about 1:00 pm Mountain Time, where we were greeted by State President Jack Lawrence and SDGER Charles Serventi and his wife Betty. As we left the airport for the short drive to the Double Tree Hotel in Tempe, site of the Convention, the difference in the temperature from Virginia was quite noticeable.



Ron and Nancy with SDGER Charles Serventi and his wife Betty

Daytime temperatures would rise to over 100 degrees throughout our visit and everyone said "Enjoy this cool weather, it won't last long!"

At the hotel we were met by other Arizona Elks, including Marianne Lawrence, wife of State President Jack Lawrence, and Al and Brenda Kayal, our escorts for the week. PGER and State Sponsor Jim Grillo and his wife Lucia were unable to attend the convention as he continued to aid in his brother's ongoing treatment for cancer. Nevada State President Bill Wiseman and his wife Mela and Utah State President Bob Pagnani and his wife Adele, old friends from earlier in our travels, were guests of the Convention. We also met up with Larry and Ilene Lee who had been our escorts on our first trip to Wolf Point, Montana. Ilene got sick in Wolf Point and they had to leave early, so it was great to see them again. After dropping our luggage and a quick lunch, Ron



Ron and Nancy with outgoing State President Jack Lawrence and wife Marianne



Our Escorts Al and Brenda Kayal with Ron and Nancy

headed off for meetings with the State Trustees and the Past State Presidents, then spent the remainder of the afternoon visiting with many Arizona Elks.



Tempe Lodge 2251 ER
Larry Pratt, winner of
GER Wine Raffle which
raised \$2,090 for ENF

Arizona has forty-six Lodges and over 25,000 Members. The State Major Projects are the Steele Children's Research Center and the Elks Youth Camp. The State, with several Lodges over 1,000 Members, had donations to ENF of \$7.69 Per Capita and Arizona Lodges received fifty-six ENF Community Grants. Fountain Hills 2846 had the highest ENF Per Capita last year at \$59. Ten Lodges received at least three Grants, and Phoenix 335 had an Impact Grant. Apache Junction 2349 and Gilbert 2848 received four Grants each. The Prescott, Page, and Raceway Lodges had Membership gains of twelve percent, and the State's two largest Lodges, Lake Havasu 2399 with 3,359 members and Sun City 2559 with 3008 members each recorded significant gains. Wednesday night we attended a casual Reception and Dinner at the hotel, then retired early (Arizona time) after a long day. Unfortunately, we were both awake about 3:30 am Thursday.

Ron attended the first Business Session on Thursday morning. A Color Guard from the Hamilton High School ROTC helped open all three Sessions during the Convention. Americanism, ENF, and Veterans Service were featured during the Session with many great reports of Lodge Programs and Contest results. Arizona Elks provide tremendous support for the State's three VA Hospitals and two VA Homes, and David Gnuschke was named Veterans Volunteer of the Year. Arizona Elks donated 1,130 Units of blood last year. Ron spoke about seeing the Arrival of Honor Flight at DC Reagan Airport as we were leaving and the importance of the Lodge Charity Reports and the meaning behind his GER Pin. In the afternoon, Ron attended and spoke at the Membership and Public Relations meeting. After lunch, Ron attended meetings with SDGER Serventi and the DD-Designates, and several Lodges. The Memorial Service was



Ron and David
Gnuschke, Veterans
Volunteer of the Year
from Tucson 385

at 4:00 pm with Grand Lodge Organist and Sun City Member Bob Bjornaas and soloist Tom Freestone adding greatly to the Service.



Grand Lodge Organist
Bob Bjornaas and Soloist,
Tom Freestone

A Reception for State President Jack Lawrence was held at 5:15 pm, followed by the Association Reception at 6:00 pm, and their Fun Night Dinner. Following dinner, we enjoyed a fun who-done-it skit entitled "Murder at the Elks Lodge" written and performed by Members of the Sun City Lodge. The fun continued in the State Hospitality Room with Karaoke. They didn't have our signature song, "Green Acres" so we didn't

sing.

The Second Business Session was held Friday morning. Eleven teams competed in the State Ritual Contest with the Finals being on Friday. Lake Havasu won the State PR Award and Apache Junction was named "Lodge of the Year." There were reports on the Leather Program, Lodge Activities, Membership, and PR. Arizona Elks support the Leather Program through donations for the purchase of leather goods for Veterans, awarded \$132,000 in scholarships last year, and through their Social Welfare Program clothed 1,179 children. Ron spoke about being Loud and Proud and how the Lodges could change their signs and change their image. Friday afternoon Ron attended a meeting with the DD-Designates and District Leaders and the Business Practices Seminar.



Some of the ladies and their fancy
hats for the Luncheon

The Ladies Luncheon was held Friday afternoon. The theme for the luncheon was "Hats". Some of the ladies really came in with fun hats or some were quite lovely. Jack Lawrence came into the luncheon to introduce SDGER Charles Serventi who introduced Ron and Bob Duitsman from the Grand Forum. Nancy made a few remarks regarding some of our travels during the year as did Marianne Lawrence, First Lady of Arizona. Diane Skorupski, the in-coming First Lady, was also introduced.

The Major Projects Meeting and the Third Business Session were held on Saturday morning. Dr Fayez Ghishan, Director of the Steele Children's Research Center, talked about the program and its genome research to find cures. Jamie Enez, the mother of ten year old triplets suffering from serious auto-immune diseases, who are served by Steele, spoke about the difficulty in dealing with the diseases and thanked the Elks for their support of Steele. The Steele



Ron and Dennis Mack, ER of Apache Junction 2349, Arizona Lodge of the Year Winner

program serves over 60,000 children with serious illnesses every year. Youth Camp Director Tom Miller spoke about the camp and how it is open to all groups and organizations serving children. Jimm Krausman, Executive Director of Major Projects, announced two new projects: Ryan House, a respite providing therapeutic activities for end-of-life children, and the purchase of a \$150,000 research microscope for Steele. An ER's March raised \$74,100 from the Lodges and an Elks jewelry auction conducted by SDGER Charlie Serventi raised another



Jack Lawrence and Jimm Krausman, Director of Arizona State Major Projects, Inc, presenting Dr. Ghishan (sitting in his new rocking chair) with a check for \$125,000

\$1,400 for the State Major Projects. Lastly, Dr Ghishan was presented with a rocking chair made by President Lawrence and a check for \$125,000 for the Steele Center. Arizona has an \$8.00 per



Ron with Law Enforcement Officer of the Year Detective Morning Johnson



Ron with Clifford Maxwell, Firefighter of the Year nominated by Show Low Lodge 2090

Member Goal for donations to the State Major Project, which they far exceeded.

The Business Session was filled with District and Lodge awards for Hoop Shoot, Youth Activities, Drug Awareness, and Scholarships. The Hoop Shoot had 13,121 participants

and one National Finalist, Green Valley had the best Americanism Brochure, and Mesa-Buckhorn and Lake Havasu won Drug Awareness Awards. Detective



Phoenix Lodge 335, State Ritual
Champions



Ron and Nancy with in-
coming State President
Al Skorupski and wife
Diane

Morning Johnson and Fireman Clifford Maxwell, both nominated by the Show Low Lodge, were named State Law Enforcement Officer and Firefighter of the Year, respectively. Detective Seth Blount, sponsored by Apache Junction, was named the State Enrique Camareno Award winner. Tom Miller was awarded a \$1,000 ENF Honorary Founder Award by State Trustees. Ritual Contest winners were announced with Phoenix Lodge taking first place with second place going to the Show Low Lodge. Lake Havasu won the State Travelling Trophy for Youth Activities.

The Session and Convention ended with the Installation of new State President Al Skorupski of the Wilcox Lodge, and the other elected and appointed Officers.

We did not fly out until Sunday morning, so we had time to visit the Tempe and Phoenix Lodges Saturday night with Al and Brenda Kayal. Tempe had prepared appetizers for our visit and we were given a tour of the Lodge by ER Jimmy Davis and wife Patti and PSP Larry Pratt and wife Stephanie. We arrived at the Phoenix Lodge after their "Rat Pack" Dinner, but in time for some cake to celebrate the victory by their Ritual Team. ER Janice Christensen and her husband Keith gave us a tour of the Lodge. We left Sunday morning at 10:00 am for our visit with the California-Hawaii Elks.



Exalted Ruler of Phoenix
Lodge 335 Janice
Christensen, her
husband Keith, Ron and
Nancy, and Al and
Brenda Kayal

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Ron with Tom
Miller receiving the
\$1,000 ENF
Honorary Founders
Award



Ron and Nancy with ER
Larry Pratt and his wife
Stephanie during our visit
to Tempe 2251